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WENDELL PHILLIPS

WENDELL PHILLIPS

THE FAITH OF AN AMERICAN

BY

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

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1912

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THIS ADDRESS WAS DELIVERED ON NOVEMBER 29, 1911 BEFORE THE WOODBERRY SOCIETY AND ITS FRIENDS AT ITS FIRST MEETING, IN THE HALL OF THE GROLIER CLUB, NEW YORK, TO MARK THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF WENDELL PHILLIPS

WENDELL PHILLIPS

THE FAITH OF AN AMERICAN

I THANK you, Mr. President; and, my friends, no words can express the pleasure I take in this welcome, nor my sense of the honor you have done me. I greet the Society at the beginning of its career; and it is a great happiness to find myself asked to link with the occasion the memory of a man who was to me, and still is, one of the masters of my life.

I want to tell you how it was that Wendell Phillips came to be, in my eyes, the ideal American. Do you realize what it was to be a boy in the days of the Civil War? Almost my first clear memory is of the family table when one of my older brothers burst in at the door, crying out, "They have fired on Sumter!" So deeply was that scene imprinted on my eyes that I can still see how every one looked. A few days later a tall tree from the old family wood-

lot lay stripped of its branches in the yard, like a mast,—our flag-pole; and from it the flag floated throughout the war. The young soldiers were camped on the common where I played, opposite the house; and when they went off to war, my father made them the farewell speech. I can see, as if it were yesterday, the reading of the evening newspaper after their first battle, for one son of the house, a cousin, was with them; and I can see the letter which two years later brought the message of his death. I picked lint, as every one did, for the wounded after Gettysburg. My earliest literary treasure, which was the file of my Sunday-school paper, I sent off to the army for soldiers' reading. I suppose it was my dearest possession. I remember the early April dawn when I was waked by the bells ringing for Lee's surrender, and the darker morning of Lincoln's death. I recall that the boy who told me the news was seated on the arm of a wheelbarrow;

and as I ran home, frightened and awed, I saw men crying in the street and heard women weeping in the houses, and while I was telling my tale, the bells began to toll.

Four years of this. I was but a child, but I shared the emotion of a nation. I do not think one can overestimate the power of such an experience to permeate and, as it were, drench the soul. I believe it gave moral depth to my nature, and lodged the principle of devotion to great causes in the very beatings of my heart. I was born at once, from the first flash of my intelligence, into the world of ideas; my first emotions were exercised in a nation's pulses; high instincts put forth in my breast. I was but one of thousands. I do not wish to appear singular, or to exaggerate. This is merely what it was to be a boy in those days. But child though I was, I feel that I cannot exaggerate the passion that was poured along my veins

in boyhood; and, as the commotion of the strife slowly subsided in the stormy measures of the period of reconstruction, my growing youth was still fed on great and impersonal issues of the large world. I was a school-boy, but I knew more about negro rights than Latin grammar, Santo Domingo better than the Peloponnesus; and the Franco-Prussian War, which broke out in my last school-year, was more to me than the entire outlines of ancient and modern history. Public interests had become the habit of my mind; and contemporary events were always more interesting to me than my studies.

My first recollection of hearing Wendell Phillips is from my college days, though of course he was always one of my heroes, and I may have heard him before, for we were an anti-slavery family. A gentleman of uncommon distinction in look and bearing, talking in an uncommonly conversational manner without

raising his voice, and with nothing very much to say,—that was the impression, almost disconcerting to an admirer; one was tempted to wish he would wake up and show his mettle; but you listened. Then the first thing you noticed was that people were taking up their hats; he was done. There was no sense that time had passed. He bound me with a spell. I cannot describe his oratory. I have heard many others make addresses; I never heard any other man *speak*. I measure the intensity of the impression he made upon me by the fact that, while I have very little of what is called power of visualization in memory, there are certain sentences of his which, as I have been lately reading his speeches, bring the whole man before me. I hear his intonations, I see his attitude, as if his voice were still sounding in my ears and his form standing before my eyes. 'Despotism looks down into the poor man's cradle, and knows it can crush resistance

and curb ill-will. Democracy sees the ballot in that baby-hand;"—you saw him stand above the cradle; you felt that, in comparison with that "baby-hand," the sceptres of monarchs were as dust in the balances of power. "If these things are so, the boy is born who will write the Decline and Fall of the American Republic;"—I thought that boy was sitting by me in the next seat. There was such vividness in his eloquence. And, in the old phrase, persuasion sat upon his lips. You believed what he said while he spoke. I remember a friend of mine in Lincoln, Nebraska, a gold Democrat, who was his host, relating to me in illustration of this the effect of Phillips's private talk: "Why, Woodberry," he said, "it was two days before I got back to my right senses on the currency question." I heard him seldom; but hearing him thus at intervals and at a distance, ripening now to years of manhood, not suddenly nor with any intention of

my own the spell deepened in me; and unconsciously, as it were, the patriotic passion that had consecrated my boyhood rose up and swore allegiance to this master example of a civic life. There was my sense and feeling of his magnetic power; there was, perhaps, the temperamental sympathy that has since made me, as you know, a past-master in heresies; but, more than this, there was the craving of the human heart for a living personality from which to draw strength in its faith. Of all the leaders of that time he alone was to me a living person; only from him did I have that touch which is, from generation to generation, the laying on of the hands of life.

I came to feel him yet more near. I met him once or twice. The first time was in my brother's store. He spent two summers at Beverly, during which I was for the most part away. He used to come up for his mail, and would step into the store

to read his letters and talk for an hour or so every morning; and so he became for us, in a way, a household memory; and he left two mementoes of himself, illustrating two sides of his nature,—one, a portrait of John Brown; the other, a Greek terra-cotta mask of a woman's face, from Charles Sumner's collection, as beautiful an example as I ever saw. Sometimes a child—he spoke to all the children on the street—would come in for his autograph; and he wrote, as was his well-known custom, the words, "Peace, if possible; but justice at any rate." These are memories of his age. There was another Phillips, of whom I will speak later. This was the Phillips that I knew,—an old gray man, simple, kindly, serene; a gentleman in every line of his fine features, in every motion, in every fibre; a type never to be forgotten by eyes that saw him. At a little distance, especially when he wore his great overcoat, he might have been taken for some

old farmer. It was thus he looked at Arnold's lecture when he spoke some after-words of truth about Emerson. In the streets of Boston, toward the end, he seemed a somewhat lonely figure, I used to think. I remember Nora Perry, the poetess, who knew him well, telling me of his meeting her once there and asking where she was going. "To see a friend," she replied. "Ah," he said, "you remind me of the Frenchman who received the same answer, and said, 'Take me along. I never saw one.'" Phillips had friends, and I have known some of them who have enriched my impression of him as a personality; but in early life he had few, and a man, though he have many friends, may sometimes feel like that.

Of course I do not mean to pronounce any eulogy on Wendell Phillips, or to review that career,—one of the most dramatic in the annals of American biography,—though it tempts my pen. Others,

whose lips are more skilled than mine in public encomium, will do that to-night before great audiences; the present leaders of those causes which he championed at their birth will bring him praise; the race to whom he devoted his prime, chief mourner at his grave, will deck the sod with flowers and cover his memory with gratitude. We are but a little band of friends gathered together to consider the lesson of his life. I desire, as the leader of our thoughts, to regard him independently of the transitory events and measures of his career, and rather to set forth what was fundamental in that spirit, of which his acts and words were merely the mortal phenomena.

That spirit, most strictly stated, was the soul of New England. He was a New Englander, a Bostonian, and yet more narrowly, a Boston Puritan. I refer not so much to his birth, as to his substance. The pivotal points of human history seem

often ridiculously small. You remember Lowell's fine sentence: "On a map of the world you may cover Judea with your thumb, Athens with a finger-tip; but they still lord it in the thought and action of every civilized man." The Puritan spirit is a similar phenomenon. It presents the same union of intense localization with a world-wide sweep of principle. Wendell Phillips was that burning nucleus made a living soul, whose vibrations were sent through a people. Moral depth was the distinguishing trait of his nature; remorseless logic was the biting edge of his mind. He sent his roots so far down that they seemed to clasp the very rock of righteousness, and thereby he towered the more in the intellectual air of truth. You may know a Boston man by two traits —not that he has any exclusive ownership of them: he thinks he knows, and he thinks he is right. In a world prone to error men smile at such claims; but what

if by chance they should be well founded? Wendell Phillips did know. Wendell Phillips was right. How did he achieve such an uncommon distinction in a public man?

Phillips believed in ideas. They were his stock in trade, his armory, his jewels, —what you will. To know them, to present them, to discuss them, to make them prevail,—that was his life-work. Other men profess to believe in ideas, but usually with some qualification of expediency, of opportunity, of compromise, and with a frequent disposition to rely on other agencies,—favor, money, force; but Phillips believed in ideas, rulers by their own nature, victors in their own right, whose advance was as resistless as the motion of matter, inviolable as natural law,—the reign of what ought to be. Children of man's intelligence and man's conscience, ideas are born to the inheritance of the earth. This belief in the power of the unaided idea to win was a cardinal point in

his convictions. It was a corollary of his faith in the soundness of human nature: men can know truth; men can be persuaded of it; and men—humanity—will not reject truth if once it be clear in their minds and hearts.

The great enemy of ideas is institutions. Phillips drew in with his New England milk the temper of that stock which had dethroned a king. He breathed the same transcendental air as Emerson. His view of history was practically that of the Revolutionary fathers, and, in its theoretical part, that of his great contemporaries. He had apprehended and thoroughly mastered the conception of history as the unfolding of the soul of humanity. Institutions are the successive cells of its habitancy, like the chambered nautilus.

"*Build thee more stately mansions, O my Soul!*"

The growth of the soul is a continual emergence,—a breaking of swaddling-

bands, a casting away of outgrown and wornout clothes, a transgression of sacred limits, a rending of the veil of the temple, an earthquake-fall of the pillars of the state, a resurrection into higher forms, a revolution into ampler good, an ascent where the free spirit's foot rests rising from the body of the dead past. Institutions are shells; as soon as they begin to be uncomfortable, as soon as the living body begins to feel their pressure, to be cabined and confined therein, the walls break; the young oak explodes the old acorn. Phillips was fond of repeating Goethe's simile of the plant in the porcelain vase: "If the pot cannot hold the plant," he would say, "let it crack!" Civilization laughs at institutions. Order, in the sense of the fixity and permanence of what is, which society enjoins and old men love, is a defective conception of public well-being. It may be heaven's first law, but heaven is a finished place. Change is the password of grow-

ing states. Order means acquiescence, content, a halt; persisted in, it means the atrophy of life, a living death; it is the abdication of progress. We were taught that the divine discontent in our youthful breasts was the swelling of the buds of the soul; so there is a divine discontent in the state, which is the motions of its divinity within brooding on times to come. Agitation is that part of our intellectual life where vitality resides. There ideas are born, breed, and bring forth. Without incessant agitation of ideas, public free discussion, the state is dead. Disorder, indeed, is a disturbance of our peace, an interference with our business, a trouble; but that is its purpose—to trouble. Phillips, quoting Lord Holland,—for he liked to mask his wisdom in a distinguished name,—often said: "We are well aware that the privileges of the people, the rights of free discussion, and the spirit and letter of our popular institutions must render—and

they are intended to render—the continuance of an extensive grievance, and of the dissatisfaction consequent thereupon, dangerous to the tranquillity of the country, and ultimately subversive of the authority of the state." That is the principle which, applied generally, is the universal charter of ideas, under whose freedom they maintain that incessant crumbling of institutions which is the work of growing nations.

If, in Phillips's scheme, ideas are the agents and agitation the means, the end is justice. No word was so dear to him as justice. Every chord of his voice knew its music. It was a God of justice that old New England worshipped; and throne what creed you will in her later churches, the awful imprint of that ancient faith will never fade from the hearts of her old race. The sense of justice is the bed-rock of the Puritan soul. It was this that gave passionate conviction and iron edge to the little

band of anti-slavery apostles with whom Phillips walked, pleaded, and preached through long years of hatred, contumely, and scorn. In the evening of his days that molten glow seemed to dissolve in a golden vision of a world where every man should have an equitable share in the goods of nature and the benefits of civilization, and he saw mankind converging thereto in many lands by many paths.

I cannot fully state nor adequately review the particular ideas of Phillips in their number; but I will touch on one or two of the most elementary. He believed in the principle of human equality. He was intellectually the child of that much derided but still extant document, the Declaration of Independence. Ideas are only truly alive when they are incarnated in some man. The Rights of Man were as the bone and muscle of Phillips, and the flood of human hope that once streamed from the Declaration, as a lighthouse

among the nations, made music in his blood and thrilled his nerves. He was, doubtless, sustained in his belief in human equality by his Christian convictions of the divine origin and immortal nature of man, and by his unshaken faith in that God who had made of one blood all the nations of the earth, and was a just God. In Christianity the line is so sharply drawn between all other creatures and man, "a little lower than the angels," that such a conception of the unity of human nature is almost axiomatic.

I shall not discuss the truth of the doctrine; but it lay at the roots of Phillips's faith in the people, which was his distinguishing trait as a master of public affairs. No hyperbole can overstate that faith. Phillips believed in ideas, but not in an intellectual class who are the possessors and guardians of ideas, and by that fact trustees of the masses. He believed in ideas, not in the form of know-

ledge, but in the form of wisdom. Knowledge may belong to the brain of the scholar, but wisdom is the breath of the people. Knowledge is the idea, volatile and abstract, in the mind; but wisdom is the idea dipped in the dyer's vat of life. The masses have political wisdom because the life of the people is the life of the state. An Italian boy, working out taxes on a Sicilian road, said to me once: "The poor pay with their bodies, Signore." I remembered it because the words were almost identical with Lowell's. "I am impatient," he said at Birmingham, "of being told that property is entitled to exceptional consideration because it bears all the burdens of the state. It bears those, indeed, which can most easily be borne, but poverty pays with its person the chief expenses of war, pestilence, and famine." That boy is probably now in Tripoli, "paying with his person;" that is what I mean by the political idea dipped in the dyer's

vat of life. "Theories," said Phillips, "are pleasing things, and seem to get rid of all difficulties so very easily. One must begin to abstract principles and study them. But wisdom consists in perceiving when human nature and this perverse world necessitate making exceptions to abstract truths. Any boy can see an abstract principle. Only threescore years and ten can discern precisely when and where it is well, necessary, and right to make an exception to it. That faculty is wisdom, all the rest is playing with counters. And this explains how the influx into politics of a shoal of college-boys, slenderly furnished with Greek and Latin,"—they are still more slenderly furnished now,— "but steeped in marvellous and delightful ignorance of life and public affairs, is filling the country with free-trade din."

The depositary of this life-wisdom, in state affairs, is the masses. Municipal government in America was, in Phillips's

judgment, a failure; but I cannot think he would have welcomed government by commission as a remedy, or have ever assented to that increasing tendency toward government by experts, which is observable among us. There is government business which should be conducted by competent officials; but government is not a business. It is amazing how government tends to localize itself in a class, which, temporarily dominant in the community under special circumstances, mistakes its interest and judgment for that of the whole body, and desires to be recognized as the trustee of the others; government by soldiers, by lawyers, a business-man's government, a banker's government,—what not? All are but instances of a part trying to swallow the whole. It is natural to mistake one's own point of view for the centre, hard to believe in the possibility of the antipodes where men walk, quite naturally, with their heads upside down. I re-

member an English officer at Taormina, a man of cultivation, explaining to me with great cogency and sincerity the advantage of settling human disputes by war instead of by courts; it was the better way. It is a good point in a king, considered as the head of a government, that he is neither a lawyer, nor a business-man, nor a banker, nor even an independent voter. I have no quarrel with independent voting; but when a party of independent voters assumes to be the brain and conscience of the state, and thinks to control it by possessing itself of the balance of power, like a clique in a Continental parliament,—and especially if it does this in the name of education or of any superiority residing in it, as if it were that remnant in whom was the safety of Israel,—it is an insolent challenge to popular government and breathes the spirit of the most bigoted autocracy. No. Least of all does it belong to the scholar to distrust the people; least of all

to him whose stake in the country is not property, nor any personal holdings nor gain, but rather his share of human hope for the betterment of man's lot among all nations and in distant ages; least of all to him, the dreamer, to forget where and when and by whom the blows of the incessant Revolution, which is the rise of humanity, have been struck.

"All revolutions," said Phillips, "come from below." Had he not seen it? Had he not been thrust out of the world's society, and found all that was organized and respectable in the state against him?—the more bitter the more high it stood? He had with his own lips successively consigned to damnation the Church, the Constitution, and the Union because they were doing devil's work. "When I was absorbed into this great movement," he said, "I remember well that it found me a very proud man; proud of the religious, proud of the civil, institutions of the country. Thirty years

have not brought back the young pride nor renewed the young trust. I go out with no faith whatever in institutions." And the lesson he had learned in his own person, history repeated to him from her page. Always against the mighty, the proud, the comfortable, the human mass had surged up under the pressure of its wants and instincts in the growth of time. Power, in the end, was theirs: against noble or priest, against learning or wealth, power at last rested with them. "Keep it," said Phillips; "you can never part with too little, you can never retain too much." Jealousy of power, "eternal vigilance," is the first safeguard of a free state. The people parts with power only to find an oppressor in its holder. Tyranny is the first instinct of power. It is an old maxim of state that power corrupts the hand that wields it. "No man is good enough," said Lincoln, "to rule any other man." Jealousy of power is of the essence of the

American spirit, and drawn from its historic birth; it may slumber long, but it slumbers light; and to-day the land is full of its mutterings.

How has it fared with the causes Phillips committed to the angry sea of public discussion and the stormy decision of the popular tribunal? He fought in them all; he responded to every appeal, at home, abroad. After the victory over the arch-foe, slavery, others might sigh, like the good Edmund Quincy, with a feeling of glad relief, "No more picnics, Wendell;" but his hand in that grim conflict had so closed round the sword-hilt of speech that it could not loose its grip. He fought on, and his post was always ahead. There are those who thought him foolish, headstrong, erratic, fanatic, wrong; but when was he ever thought otherwise by his opponents, or by the indifferent,—men still unenlightened by the event? I make no apologies for him. Examine the record.

You can follow the trail of triumphant popular causes by the echoes of that silver voice. Woman suffrage, labor, temperance,—these have made giant strides since he was laid to rest. Ireland has home rule at her door. Russia has the Duma. Capital punishment, indeed, still survives, but there has been great advance in the general attitude toward, and treatment of, the criminal and delinquent classes, though there has been occasionally a barbaric return to the whipping-post, and today we hear again on all sides the bloodhound cry for the speedy trial and quick death of the murderer. The initiative, the referendum, and the recall, there can be no doubt, would have had Phillips's hearty coöperation and support. They are but the precipitation of his thought. The recall of the judges would not have dismayed him. He had recalled a judge. The recall of judges is Massachusetts doctrine as old as the state. It is effected by the will

of the governor, acting on a simple address of the legislature by a majority vote without other ground than the people's desire. Edward G. Loring was thus recalled, on the initiative of Phillips and others, for the reason that, although acting in a legal and official manner as federal commissioner under the Fugitive Slave Act, a "slave-hunter"—as they called him—was unfit to be a Massachusetts judge. Phillips foretold, as did also Lowell in the Birmingham speech, the present conflict with incorporated wealth. "The great question of the future," he said, "is money against legislation. My friends, you and I shall be in our graves long before that battle is ended; and unless our children have more patience and courage than saved this country from slavery, republican institutions will go down before moneyed corporations. The corporations of America mean to govern; and unless some power more radical than ordinary politics is found, will

govern inevitably. The only hope of any effectual grapple with the danger lies in rousing the masses whose interests lie permanently in the opposite direction." Take up the record where you will, if you deny merit to Phillips in his latter-day instincts and pleadings, you must deny wisdom to the actual movement of the last thirty years and the plain current of American democratic development at the present day.

If there has been recession anywhere, it is in the matter which lay nearest to Phillips's heart,—negro rights, race equality, and in general in the attitude of the public mind toward the principle of an integral humanity, one and the same in all men, which is found in the Declaration. The change of view, which I think no one can doubt, is not peculiar to us, but is world-wide, and is consequent on the spread of European dominion over the so-called backward peoples of Asia and Africa. The

sins of a nation lie close to its virtues. The strength of our age is commerce, resting on industry. It is a thing of vast beneficence, and loads with blessings those nations whom it benefits; but like all strength it has its temptations. Our temptation is to exploit the backward nations, and possess ourselves of their lands. If they escape the destruction that overtook the Indian, it is because there are too many of them. The conqueror, in old times, when there was a surplus of subject populations, enslaved them. We take them into our tutelage. The idea of tutelage readily passes into a conception of our wards as permanently inferior, but economically useful. It breeds the notion of servile races. The question of human equality has broadened. It is no longer a question of a black skin, but of any skin except white; so true is it that a prejudice against one race is a prejudice against all races, and will finally prove so. I am not going to dispose of the negro

question to-night; but I mean to state a few matters of what seems to me elementary truth.

I say nothing of the denial of negro rights by lynching. That is a mere brutality. We are shamed in the face of civilized nations as no other of the group, except Russia, has been shamed for centuries; but though the impeachment of our humanity is patent, tragic, and terrible, I do not believe that the brutalities of recent years are a drop in the bucket in comparison with what the negro race suffered under slavery in old days. They are sporadic; they are blazed upon by the pitiless publicity of all the world; they are outlawed, and resemble acts of brigandage. I note only the extension of lynching to white men and the spread of the habit of burning negroes to Northern States. You cannot calmly watch a fire in your neighbor's house; it will leap to your own roof. You cannot wink at crime in

your neighbor's dooryard; it will soon be in your own. The denial of negro rights by the nullification of the constitutional amendments is a graver matter. I have only this to say, that no student of history can be surprised at a diminishing respect for a Constitution that does not maintain itself as the supreme law of the land honestly abided by. Phillips stated the true principle: "The proper time to maintain one's rights is when they are denied; the proper persons to maintain them are those to whom they are denied." I devoutly hope that the negroes will so grow in manhood as to be their own saviours in the fulness of time, as our own fathers long ago wrenched from the hands of unwilling masters the rights that are now our dearest possession.

I should have much to say of negro education, were there time. The principle is plain. Demand the same schools for negroes as for white men. There is a

tendency to restrict negro education to industrial pursuits. It is the same spirit which advocates vocational schools for the children of the laboring classes. It is no longer a question of the black serf, but of the economic animal of any color. I believe in manual training for all children; I believe in vocational schools; but these latter are, as it were, the professional schools of the workers, and should bear the same relation to a moral and mental training, preparatory to or associated with them, that professional schools bear to the college. The first thing to teach a child is that he has a soul; the first thing to give a boy is an outlook on a moral, intellectual, and aesthetic world. Not to endow him with that is to leave him without horizons, a human creature blind and deaf, centred in the work of his hands and in physical conditions,—an economic animal. In the educational tendencies to which I refer, there is too much of man as an economic

animal. The negro is no more so than the white man. Give the negroes, then, the same schools as the whites; give the sons of the laboring classes the same schools as all other children of the state,—citizen schools.

Man is an economic animal, but he is not primarily that; and he should not be educated primarily with a view to that, but to his being a man. The workers should always be jealously on their guard against any principle of caste. The interests of the negroes will finally be found to be permanently identical with those of the working class everywhere, and labor should never acquiesce in any social view or arrangement which contemplates the laboring mass of men with hands lifted and shoulders bowed to receive the burden from a higher class more fortunately endowed to be their masters. You can acknowledge your inferiority to others in acquirements, capacity, efficiency; but you

cannot acknowledge inferiority in your being. You may lay the humblest tasks upon yourself, as saints and sages besides Milton have done; but you yourself must lay them on. If our economic system necessarily embodies a principle of caste, why, then, as Phillips said, "let it crack!" Let it go the way of many another institution that once seemed all powerful and of the very substance of necessity, to the heap of old shards!

> "*For what avail*
> *The plow and sail,*"

unless the man be free? I deplore the temper which acquiesces in the conception of permanent servile classes in the state, educated to be such, and the spirit of deference thereto, on whatsoever ground it may be based. It is not by deference that men win their rights. It is not by denying their own share in the spiritual nature of man and their participation in the high heritage of civilization that men mount in

that realm and possess themselves of that good.

There is one other point. A race is judged, with regard to its capacity, like a poet, not by its normal and average product, but by its best. That is the rule. I suppose that the most immortal oration of Wendell Phillips, as a formal production, is that on Toussaint L'Ouverture. I can remember the hour and the place when in my boyhood I discovered Shakspere, Byron, Shelley, Carlyle, Scott, Tasso, Virgil, Homer; but there are some names I seem always to have known. The Bible, Washington, Whittier, Milton, William Tell, Algernon Sidney, Garibaldi, Toussaint L'Ouverture, mix their figures with the shadows of my very dawn of life. I suppose I owe Toussaint L'Ouverture to Phillips. The speech is a marvellous example of oratorical art, and will be treasured through generations by negroes as the first eulogy of a man of their race. No

one who has read it can ever forget its peroration, when the orator, sinking to his close, like the sun setting in the sea, seemed to fill the earth with light, and touched with his glory the mountain-peaks of history,—summits of human achievement, Phocion, Brutus, Hampden, La Fayette, Washington, John Brown,—and high over all poured his light on Toussaint L'Ouverture; high over all, not in arms, letters, or arts, but in moral greatness, which all men agree is the supreme excellence of man.

There is one thing that latitude and longitude do not bound, nor geography, nor climate, nor ancestry, nor poverty, nor ignorance, nor previous condition of barbarism,—one capacity, at least, common to mankind, moral power. Who of us has not, at some time or other, stood amazed and reverent before some simple human act, among the humble, in which the soul shone forth, as if disapparelled

of its poor belongings, in its own nature? I believe that the race which is thus capable of moral power can scale all other heights. It may be that the negroes, considered with a view to their social utility, like all other masses of men, are capable only of an economic service. That is the main task of mankind. But beware of closing the gates of mercy on those young ambitions, those forward instincts, the prayers and struggles of the waking soul of a race! Give the negroes a true university,—a white man's university. The trials and discouragements of genius are an old and sad story in our own annals. Think what the burden must be that rests on negro efforts. I say these things with no desire to trouble the waters, as indeed I have no right. I know that negro education is in conscientious and devoted hands. But these were things dear to Phillips's heart; they are a part of the sacred heritage he entrusted to those who were

touched by his spirit and should follow his leading.

It is obvious that I regard negro rights as a part of a larger matter, gradually fusing with the attitude of public thought toward all race questions. The revolutionary principle of human equality flows now in a world channel. I am more concerned with the future of the backward nations, and our part therein. Something might be said in behalf of the integrity of indigenous ideals by one who, like myself, knows no absolute truth, and looks on all institutions as human,—the house of life which generations and races build for themselves out of their own hearts and thoughts for a temporary abiding place. But the notion of the universal integrity of the soul of humanity, one and the same in all races, involves that of their union in one civilization, since truth is universal. The truth of man is as universal as the truth of matter, and, under present conditions of com-

munication, must in the end draw the nations together.

The recent advance of the backward nations is hardly realized by us. They have made more speed in progress relatively than ourselves. We have progressed in knowledge of the nature of matter, in the mechanic arts, and in economic organization, — things easily communicated and to be quickly appropriated. In certain matters, it is to be remembered, some of the backward nations have a greater past than ourselves, in art and in thought, for example. I myself regard America as a backward nation in her own group. We have had but one original thinker in the last generation, William James, and I had to go to Europe to find it out; they do not seem to know it yet in Boston. A brief contact with Continental thought and affairs is sufficient to reveal, not only the finer quality, variety, and potency of civilizing power there, but the

great gap by which we fail of their realized advance in ideas, measures, and anticipations. There one feels the pulses of the world. I cannot overstate my sense of the degree in which we lag behind in all that concerns the world except trade. I feel the more regret, therefore, when I observe the weakening of our hold on the one great principle that has distinguished us as a nation,—our sense of political justice, in which we have stood at least equally with France and England in the van. America's title to glory among the nations is her service to human liberty. I can bear that we should fail, relatively, in art and letters, have little sense of beauty, or skill in man's highest wisdom, philosophic thought, or in his highest faculty, imagination; but I cannot bear that we should fail in justice. I cannot bear that we should tear the Declaration across, revoke our welcome to the poor of all the earth, tyrannize over weaker states, con-

duct our diplomacy on a basis of trade instead of right, or abate by a hair's breadth our standard of human respect for all mankind. I lament the acquiescence of the times in a general recreancy to our fathers' principles. "The feet of the avenging hours are shod with wool," said the old Greeks. In the end God takes his price. But I pray that America may yet long maintain at home and abroad that Declaration which at our birth lit the hopes of all the world.

I have wearied you with long talking; but my heart is in my words. It has become plain as I have been speaking that I have set forth some elements of the American ideal, and that at the heart of that ideal is a faith. Phillips embodied it. We all need a faith, however we may strive to be rationalistic, agnostic, and to move only on the sure ground of ascertained truth. Without faith we are without horizons, a line of march, something

ahead. All great rallying cries are in the future. Faith is beyond us,—our better part; it is the complement of the American ideal, its atmosphere and heavenly sustenance. The faith of one age is the fact of the next; and then how differently it looks! The fact seems as if it had always been. When the victor is crowned, his path to the goal looks as plain and straight as the king's highway. Who could miss that road? How simple was Phillips's career! It was a case of the hour for the man as well as the man for the hour, from his first sally when the unknown youth of twenty-four climbed the platform of Faneuil Hall, and at the first blow threw his already triumphing opponent dead and forever dishonored on the field. How practical he was! Defeat and victory alike were weapons in his hands. He had been preaching disunion for a quarter of a century when he stepped forth as the chief orator of the Union cause. He was capable

of that great reversal. He welcomed all instruments,—yes, welcomed "dynamite and the dagger" in their place, while Harvard sat spell-bound at the rapt and daring defense of the world-proscribed cause by the lonely truth-teller. Do you wonder that the people loved their great tribune at the last? Boston to-day has seen from dawn to midnight such a commemoration as the city has not witnessed in my time,—the people's tribute. Other recent centennials have been rather conventional affairs; but to-day the Boston pavements that he loved, as he said, from when his mother's hands held up his toddling steps, have waked their music, and every footfall has been a note in the thanksgiving psalm of the city for a son worthy of his birthplace.

How simple it seems now! But we,—our causes are doubtful. "We are but one or two," we say. Did crowds go with him? "We shall be discredited." Did he move

amid applause? "And then, the risks," we add. Did he run none? You need not fear that your shoulder to the wheel will greatly accelerate anything in this old world; a thousand elements of power must conjoin in any great forward and revolutionary change. The fate of the world speeds only when the horses of the god draw the car. It is impossible to lead life without taking risks. I know that much that I have said to-night is heavy with risk. The willingness to take risks is one gauge of faith. Risk is a part of God's game, alike for men and nations. You must look down the mouth of a revolver to learn how often it misses the mark. Poltroonery steadies the aim of the foe. Death is not the worst of life. Defeat is not the worst of failures. Not to have tried is the true failure. Above all, do not draw back because everything is not plain, and you may, perhaps, be mistaken. Obscurity is always the air of the present hour. "At